

Series I
Correspondence,
1932-1973

Box 9, Folder 13

Copies of
correspondence to
ADM T.C. Kinkaid,...
1950-1953,...

0926

XII
Ack'd 22 March 1950

Keyte Self
Lt. Cdr. GUILLIAEM AERTSEN, III USNR
Torresdale
Philadelphia, 14, Pa.

March 6, 1950.

Capt. Samuel E. Morison
44 Primmer St.
Boston 8, Mass.

Dear Capt. Morison,

During the war years overseas my duty assignments allowed me access to the classified information available to the commands under which I served. Possibly because of this I interpreted faithfully the standing order not to maintain a diary or other form of log of events which might at any time be of potential value to the enemy. Had I foreseen the occasion wherein the retaining of certain facts would have contributed to the accuracy of history and not to the outcome of the war, I might well have noted some events at least in sufficient detail to jog my memory at a later date. Your request that I give you the details of Admiral Lee's warnings to Admiral Halsey during the activities of October 24-25, 1944, is a case in point. The following information is scant for without any outline of events to awaken my memory of the night in question, the exact sequence of events is difficult to recollect.

Throughout October 24, 1944, three of Adm Halsey's four carrier task groups conducted repeated air strikes against the heavy surface vessels comprising the Japanese Central Force as they headed through the Sibuyan Sea toward the Straits of San Bernardino. While this force was the immediate threat, the lack of knowledge as to the whereabouts of the Japanese carriers was also a matter of great concern to the Third Fleet.

Late in the afternoon of the 24th our air searches located the carriers northeast of Luzon. As contact reports came in on these ships, reports of extensive damage and apparent disorganization of the Jap Central Force also continued to reach us. This condition gave rise to a difficult decision concerning the proper course of action to be taken by the Third Fleet during the coming night.

The record is clear as to what Adm. Halsey did about it. Adm. Lee was ~~also~~ also apprehensive about the potentialities of the Jap carriers. He also remembered how the Jap carriers had been used as decoys on several occasions during the Solomons actions and he consequently was firmly of the opinion that the San Bernardino Straits should not be left unguarded. His alert mind and keen analytical sense was actively reducing the mass of contact reports and intelligence information to channels of likely action by the Japanese. He could not bring himself to believe that the Japanese had sufficient carrier planes and pilots available to ~~effectively~~ carry out an effective operation with the Northern Force, nor could he satisfy himself that the Central Force was so completely deteriorated that it would retire from the field of action.

Plans for the formation of Task Force 34 (Heavy Surface Striking Force) and instructions for its tactical operations were ready and required only to be ordered into being by Adm. Halsey. Therefore he

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was not handicapped in his difficult position by any lack of readiness for a surface action other than to separate his forces and rearrange his ships into respective air and surface combat groups.

Adm Lee sent a message to Adm. Halsey giving him his estimate of the situation and his recommendation for the coming night. This message, as I remember, was sent visually rather than by radio and was dispatched sufficiently in advance of dusk to insure receipt before darkness rendered visual signalling prejudicial to the security of the force. I dare not attempt to reconstruct in detail the specific contents of this message other than to say that it contained the ideas of Adm Lee's as outlined above.

The last returning fliers of the daylight strike groups gave evidence that the Central Force was retiring in disorganized fashion. Night fighters from the Independence were dispatched to take another look at the circling Jap heavy ships as Adm. Halsey started his fleet North toward the approaching carrier forces. These night fighters I believe were to have been relieved by catalinas from Adm. Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet. They did not time their arrival as planned. I do not know the story of this breakdown of vital reconnaissance, but I do know that as we headed North communications with the planes watching the Central Force became increasingly difficult and the picture of what that force was doing grew increasingly vague. The Independence night fighters left the scene, the Third Fleet was steaming North, and the night was well upon us. Adm. Lee continued to study the picture of Jap activity and it appeared to him that the Jap Central Force had ceased to retreat. I do not remember the source of the reports which gave him the impression that the Jap retirement was only a feint at sunset and ~~that~~ that the Central Force, in reduced numbers, was ~~still~~ again headed in the direction of the Straits. This ~~was~~ the motive for his second message to Adm. Halsey which he sent, I believe, prior to the directive from Adm. Halsey to form Task Force 34.

The rest of the story has been told by Adm Halsey in his own book. I sincerely hope that somewhere in the files or staff logs of the Third Fleet these messages sent by Adm. Lee will be found. If not, and if you so desire, I will be delighted to furnish every bit of information possible on the matter. Perhaps if I could review the staff log of our own command my memory might return additional bits of fact to light which would be of value to the history of this active night in 1944.

Adm. Lee never blew his own trumpet, and engaged in other people's affairs only when asked to do so (which was frequent whenever the fleet was in port), and therefore the two messages under discussion were designed and dispatched in harmony with his desire not to confuse his superior officer with uninvited sideline advice. I am not sure that the first dispatch was not in the form of a personal "MSG" to Adm. Halsey.

When your consideration approached the sinking of the YAMATO later in the war, I have only copy of an air photo of the smoke pall marking her final resting place inscribed and signed by Adm Mitscher to Adm Lee with the comment that "this is the picture I believe you wanted of the YAMATO". The two admirals were great friends and the air-surface rivalry took the form of healthy cooperation as well as good-hearted jesting. If you have not come across a copy of ~~xxx~~₁₈

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(3)

of this inscribed photo and if you think it would be suitable for reproduction in your history, I will gladly lend it to you for the purpose of reprint.

Sincerely yours,

William Brewster

0930

FORWARDED BY
RECORDING OFFICER
AND CLERK TO

NA22/10/JIB/ja

U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
LAMBERT FIELD
ST. LOUIS 21, MISSOURI

21 April 1953

Admiral T. C. Kincaid
2134 R Street N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Dear Admiral:

In my records I have the story of the HALFMOON in her engagements in the South Pacific while operating under your command. I had hoped to find details of the searches which went out the night of the Battle of Surigao Straits, however, I find that the record merely says that in spite of numerous enemy interruptions, VPB-33 got its planes out that night on their scheduled missions.

From my own recollections, I can tell you a little more about it. As you may remember, we were anchored at the northern end of Surigao Straits on the west side, just behind the Combungan Grande Island. On the afternoon of 24 October at about 1400, I received a dispatch telling me to search the Mindanao Sea, the Sibuyan Sea and about two other adjacent seas for which I have forgotten the names, and also the north and east coast of Samar.

I had heard of the southern attack force, but I had no information on the center attack force.

The planes available were PRY's, VPB-33, equipped unfortunately with the very earliest type of radar which could give only an "A" Scope presentation. This type of presentation in waters dotted with many islands, as the Philippines were, was not very satisfactory when you were looking for ships. My previous experience had been that with that type of radar we practically never found a ship.

While I was in my cabin trying to plot out the searches and preparing a briefing for the evening missions, we were attacked by two sallies. One bombed and strafed the ship, and the other attacked the moored planes. This created quite a diversion. We had some difficulty in getting the planes off. I got them out originally by sunset, and then they started returning with radar and engine troubles. But by keeping repair crews on the water, I finally got the last plane off on its mission by 10 o'clock that night. As I remember, we sent two planes to the Mindanao Sea and one plane up the coast of Samar.

The planes through the Mindanao Sea found nothing, although they must have flown over the Jap fleet. On their return in the morning, they were shot up by our own cruisers and one of them sank upon landing.

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RECEIVED BY
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
AND REPLIED TO

NA22/16/JIB/ja

U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
LAMBERT FIELD
ST. LOUIS 21, MISSOURI

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I had heard of the southern attack force, but I had no information on the center attack force.

The planes available were PBV's, VPB-33, equipped unfortunately with the very earliest type of radar which could give only an "A" Scope presentation. This type of presentation in waters dotted with many islands, as the Philippines were, was not very satisfactory when you were looking for ships. My previous experience had been that with that type of radar we practically never found a ship.

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I have recently talked with the co-pilot of the plane which searched the east and north coast of Samar, so his troubles are fresh in my mind. As they left the Leyte ^{area} heading east, they could not distinguish on their radar between islands and ships and since they were fired at repeatedly by our own ships, they began to give every blip on the radar a wide berth. As a result, for a period of about one hour, due to their erratic course, they were somewhat lost but finally managed to get clear and start up the coast. However, they were still avoiding the blips for with that scope presentation, they could not tell what they were looking at. The co-pilot said that at one time during the night he thought he saw wakes - and probably did. However, he could not tell accurately enough and made no report of it. They had not been briefed to expect any enemy shipping along that coast, as I did not know that there was any probability of a center force. On their return the next morning, they were also damaged by friendly fire.

In my opinion you used the air power that you had, which was pretty feeble, to the best of your ability. However, due to the antique radar equipment, the night search had only a slim chance of producing results because actually it had to be a visual search and that was very difficult under the prevailing conditions. If we had had the type of radar equipment which was in the PBM's we received a few months later, I believe that we could have made a very effective night search because with the modern radar which the PBM's had, it was easy to distinguish between ships and islands and I believe the air search would have been productive.

I expect to be in Washington for a week or so about 10 May and I will bring along the account of the USS HALFMOON's trials and tribulations. Perhaps it may be of interest to you as a source of material for your book.

I have always been happy that I served in the Seventh Fleet, especially under Admiral Wagner, because I felt we had a real fighting outfit and, in spite of our difficulties with worn out equipment and poor logistics support as compared to the Third and Fifth Fleets, I think we did a good job.

I will never forget that Battle of Surigao Straits, because, as you may remember, the HALFMOON was caught between the two fleets and we had a beautiful grand stand view of the night's engagement. This is something most Naval officers never get a chance to watch.

Sincerely yours,

J. *J. J. Bandy*
BANDY

0933

Ans 6 April

and Remond 6 April

FRANK D. WAGNER
P. O. BOX 4634
WARRINGTON, FLORIDA

2 April, 1953

Dear Admiral Kinkaid,

It was very good indeed to see you in Washington and finally to meet Mrs. Kinkaid. She is charming and Ray and I hope we may see her sometime. We hope she is recovering satisfactorily.

On our return to Pensacola I searched the records of the Surigao Straits & San Bernardino Straits affair and found them to be very sketchy. I am sure I did remember the fact that ^{Capt Jack Remond} Remond is on duty in Washington. Also, fortuitously, Captain J. I. Bandy, who commanded the ^{Chelan} ~~Chelan~~ tender ^{Chelan} ~~Chelan~~ in Leyte at the time in question, came to Pensacola. He remembers well the searches you ordered and I have taken the liberty of asking him to look you up when he goes to Washington. He assured me he would. Currently he is C.O. of the Naval Air Station, Saint Louis Missouri and has to go to Washington rather frequently.

The land based patrol planes should have sighted both Jap forces and as my memory serves me one force was sighted but the plane could not get on the radio circuit and had to fly back to Morotai to get off his contact report - this I told you in Washington. As my memory serves me the other planes search was terminated when Jap fighters attacked the patrol plane and shot out one engine - which was all too common in those ^{heated} ~~heated~~ days.

The wing commander was Captain Carroll B. ("Doc") Jones.

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Ans
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and Renard 6 April

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I suggest that you have Percard write Jones and get the details from him?

I have an Aircraft 7th Fleet Bulletin that gives a good account of the Surigao action as seen from the side lines - just interesting not too good historically and also I have the search plans from the time I took air Seventh Fleet until the end of the war. If you'd care to use them I'll send them to you, registered.

Again it was so good to see you and Mrs. Kimbrell and to have a drink with you. Ray joins in our very best to you both.

Sincerely

Frank H. Wagner

ADDRESS ONLY TO
CONTROLLING OFFICER.
AND OTHERS.

NA22/10/JTB/ja

U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
LAMBERT FIELD
ST. LOUIS 21, MISSOURI

22 May 1953

Admiral T. C. Kinkaid
2134 "R" Street N. W.
Washington, D. C.

Dear Admiral Kinkaid:

I am very sorry that I was unable to get in touch with you while I was in Washington. I looked up your address in the phone book. Now that I have returned to my office and found your letter, I am sorry to have spelled your name incorrectly. That is why I couldn't find it in the phone book. However, the Survey Board kept me rather busy and I did not have very much free time.

I am enclosing some old rough copies of items written up about the USS HALFMOON by some of my ship's officers. Perhaps you will find something of interest in these. When you are through with them, I would appreciate it if you can return them to me. I have nothing to add to the story of the search which I have already given you.

Sincerely yours,

J. I. Bandy
J. I. BANDY

Ans 25 May

0937

ADDRESS ONLY TO
COMMANDING OFFICER.
AND OFFICE USE.

HA22/LC/JTB/ja

U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
LAMBERT FIELD
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Sincerely yours,

J. I. BANDY

Ans 25 May

0938

Half Moon (AVP-26)

1. 27 Aug 1944 Half Moon anchored off end of strip on Middleburg Island, Cape Sansapor, New Guinea. 1930 bomb exploded 300 yds. Sth side. Jap attacks continued next four nights mostly against air strip. Japs came from strip 10 miles away - discovered 5th day by scouts.
2. 18 Sept 1944 Half Moon arrive Morotai. Remained until 6 Oct. - attacks every evening.
3. 21 Oct 1944 Half Moon entered Sulu Gulf - anchored Hinunangan Bay, 45 miles from Jolo. Attacked by Vals & Saligs, 23 & 24 resby, got planes off on assigned mission, VPB-33. Moved to western shore Calibangan Grande Island by 2206 24 Oct, when Jap left. It was within 10 miles, started moving out, challenged by U.S. cruises, excellent view of the action.
4. 25 Oct - 0400 anchored 1 mile south of Jay Jay Point then returned to Hinunangan Bay to retrieve boats. 3 Vals attacked at 0806. Scramed planes and proceeded to San Pedro Bay, anchoring off Samar at 1412. 26 Oct repeated attacks by Jap planes. 27 Oct again attacked, same 28 Oct, underway at jedy hour.
5. 30 Oct & 8 Nov. - Typhoon. - Sporadic attacks - 26 Nov. in San Francisco Straits several attacks on Half Moon and San Carlos.
6. 27 Dec. Half Moon enroute to Mangarin Bay in Mindoro

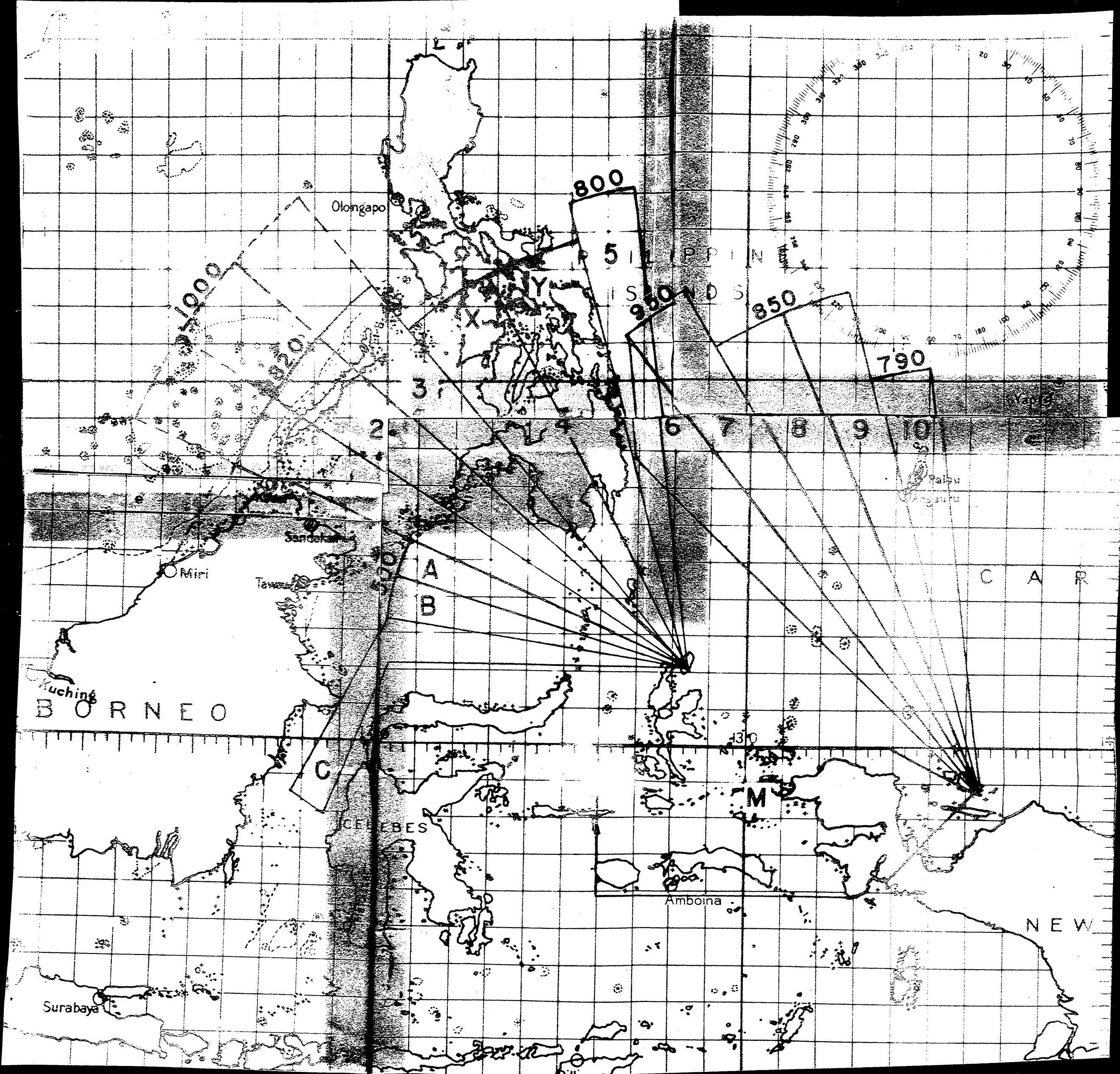
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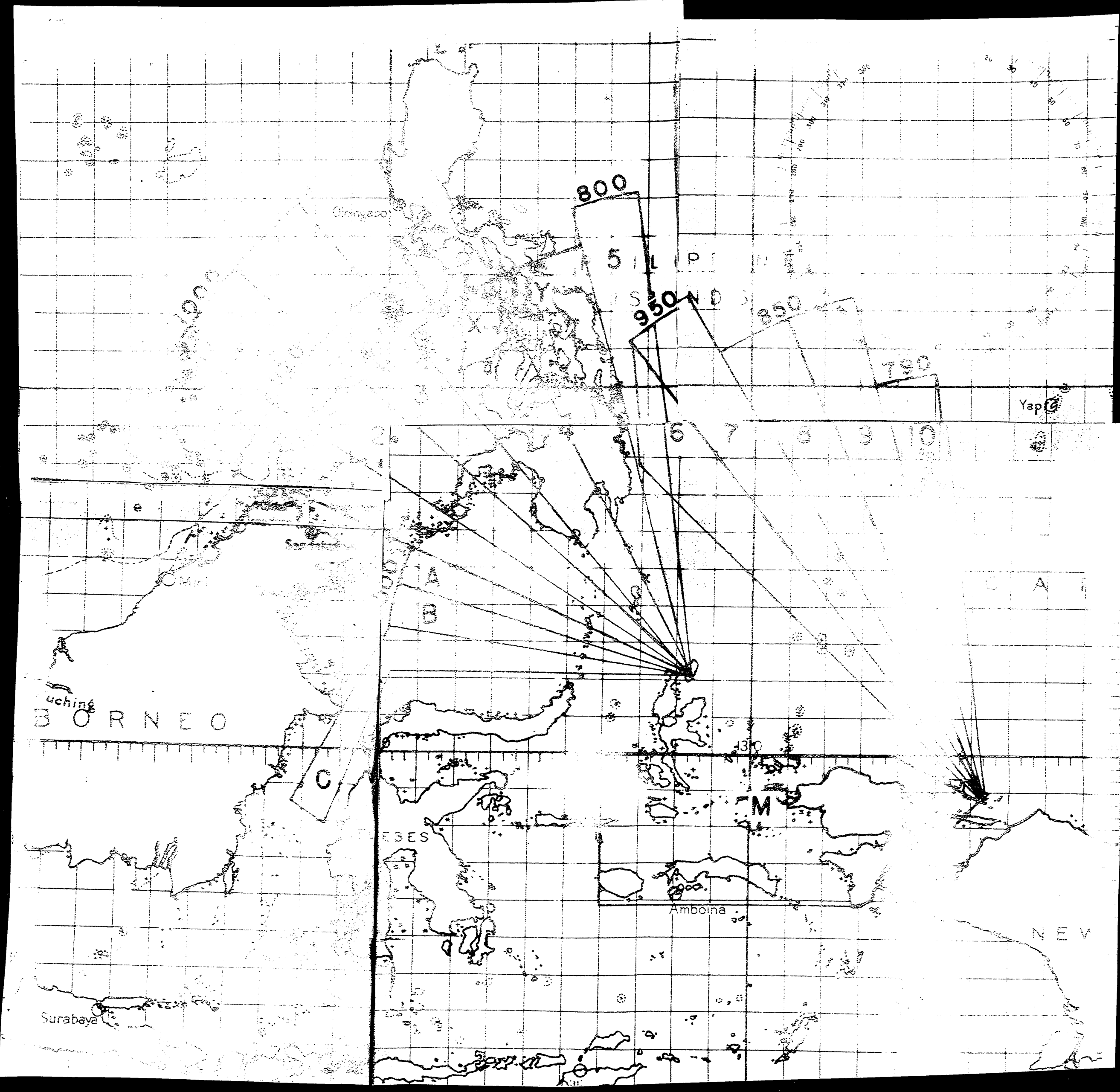
on 28 Dec weather prevented air cover from Leyte Gulf.
Suicide planes attacked, missed LST, hit ammunition
ship which burned & exploded, no survivors. FS also
disappeared with only 3 rescued. Also USS William H. Harrison
hit by suicide plane, abandoned but later towed
to Leyte. Several ships, including Porcupine, were
damaged by exploding ammunition ship. Several
attacks in late afternoon, air cover for only about
an hour during the day. LST hit and later sunk
by our forces. 29th attacks continued all day,
many enemy planes were shot down, and
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Night of 31 Dec 14 Jap planes overheard but no hits.
Last important attack on 4 Jan. by 3 Jap planes.
Ammunition ship exploded.

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It will be noted that in the above comments flat statements have usually been avoided. On the contrary, the words "general" or "generally" have often been used. This is because there is no thumb rule -- circumstances alter cases - and sound professional judgment should be the only guide.

12. Carrier task groups should, whenever practicable, consist of not less than two carriers for mutual support. It will be noted in the BLUE solution of this problem that the commander of the BLUE SOUTH CHINA SEA GROUP broke his group into two groups, each with one carrier.

ORANGE, on the contrary, broke down its Covering Group into two groups -- one the Northern Group consisting of two carriers, and the Southern Group consisting of one carrier. Thus, had the problem continued the BLUE Northern Group would have encountered two ORANGE carriers to say nothing of considerable land based aircraft. Under these conditions BLUE would have been at a definite disadvantage. It has been brought out in the operations in the ^{WESTERN} FAR EASTERN PACIFIC that such practice is generally unsound.

We had already discussed in the War College that the practice of a single carrier task force was not best. Hence my attitude towards Admiral Fletcher. War College lessons often invaluable aids in command.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

IN REPLY REFER TO

Letter 18 July

17 July 1953

My dear Admiral,

I owe you my most sincere apologies for not being more prompt in answering your letter, but it was inadvertently filed, in the course of my changing of assignments, and has just been brought to my attention.

In response to your inquiry as to the locations of Captains C. B. Jones and J. I. Barby, Jones is presently attached to the Staff of CinCLantFlt at the Naval Base, Norfolk, Virginia and Eandy is Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station, Atsugi, Japan.

It is my recollection that the Japanese Force which attempted to gain entrance to Leyte Gulf via the Surigao Straits were originally contacted by planes of FAW-17, commanded by Jones. If memory serves me right this contact was made 24 to 36 hours prior to the actual engagement. From this time on contact and contact was maintained.

In addition on the morning prior to the engagement, you sent for me and ordered that all planes available in Wing Ten, which were based in Minundangan Bay about fifty miles south of Tacloban, to augment the search and cover all entrances to Leyte Gulf especially the Surigao Straits. This was done and two planes were given the specific task of covering the Straits area. All reports, as I recall, were sent direct to the Flagship, and as I have no personal references to refresh my memory as to the contacts made, I am sure you are much more familiar as to the number and type of contacts that were made by all aircraft participating in this action.

0946



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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
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WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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Please feel free to call upon me for any assistance that I may be able to render you at any future time.

With sincere personal regards,

Very respectfully,

J. C. Renard
J. C. RENARD

Admiral T. C. Kincaid
2134 "R" Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

0948



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I realize this information is meager as I must rely upon memory alone, however I expect Captain Jones will be up this way on a visit in the near future, and I will get together with him and talk over those crucial days and perhaps between the two of us we will be able to recall more specifically the incidents, contacts, orders and actions that were performed by the patrol aircraft under your command.

Please feel free to call upon me for any assistance that I may be able to render you at any future time.

With sincere personal regards,

Very respectfully,

J. C. Renard
J. C. RENARD

Admiral T. C. Kincaid
2134 "R" Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

0949

Ans 11 Sept.

HEADQUARTERS
COMMANDER IN CHIEF
ATLANTIC COMMAND AND ATLANTIC FLEET
4 August 1953

Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, USN (RET)
2134 "R" Street, N. W.,
Washington 8, D. C.

Dear Admiral Kinkaid:

I am pleased to inform you that I have some of the information you requested in your very welcome letter of 18 July.

As you know, I was operating from Morotai and Owl prior to and during the Battle for Leyte Gulf. I had Fleet Air Wing Seventeen. Renard had Fleet Air Wing Ten with seaplanes at Leyte. I had my headquarters at Morotai.

I know little of the details of Renard's operations except I understand he was under your direct operational control at the time. Unfortunately, the records I have do not show Bernard's search plan.

I am enclosing a chart with my searches plotted covering the period of 19 October (the date of commencement from Morotai) to 4 November.

Although I was in an excellent position to intercept and provide continuous intelligence on the Brunei force, I was not given any alerting information that would have warranted extra efforts. Consequently, the searches were routine and no attempt was made to increase their frequency or to radically vary the times of the patrols. I was, however, instructed by Admiral Wagner to extend sectors 1, 2 and 3 from 850 to 1000 miles and restrict the missions to straight reconnaissance, omitting attacks on shipping. As you can see by the chart, sector 1 did not cover Brunei Bay although it could easily have done so. After the battle, Brunei Bay was covered regularly and the surviving ships of the Japanese Fleet were kept under constant surveillance until their departure.

Also, I do not remember that I was informed that DACE and DARTER were patrolling Dangerous Ground, although I was kept well informed of other submarine operations in my area of coverage.

I learned, after the war that the sortie from Brunei was timed to avoid detection by the Morotai patrol planes. In

0950

Ans 11 Sept.

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0951

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HEADQUARTERS
COMMANDER IN CHIEF
ATLANTIC COMMAND AND ATLANTIC FLEET

spite of this, sector 1 would surely have contacted the Brunei force on the 22nd, but the Nips were ready for him and fighters shot him down in Balabac Strait. Hence, this force was contacted only by DACE and DARTER and I did not receive their contact reports until late the next day. I should explain at this time that I was depending on the Air Force for my communications and they were far from satisfactory. I had a well equipped and efficient communication section on my staff but was directed over protests to leave it at Mios Woendi when I moved to Morotai. I was permitted to move it forward after the battle.

To continue, the Brunei force, transitted sectors 2 and 3 area during the night while I was still unaware of unusual activity. The next morning (23rd), section XRAY was intercepted by fighters and driven to cloud cover after having one engine shot out.

Two planes were sent out in section 3 and one of them contacted the Surigao force and the other the San Bernardino force. The former in the Sulu Sea and the latter off Mindoro. Both aircraft sent in contact reports and commenced tracking while sending amplifying reports as changes in course or disposition occurred. None of their transmissions was receipted for but they were received by the communication center of the Air Force unit guarding for me at Morotai. The next day, after the return of the aircraft, I found their messages still on a spindle in the Air Force radio shack.

The two aircraft meanwhile continued tracking their respective contacts expecting me to send other planes to relieve them on station. They were finally forced to return due to fuel shortage but not until they had seen both forces under attack by out carrier air groups.

I found later that the transmissions had been intercepted by some of our forces but never could determine if they had been of any use.

On the 23rd, I was informed by Admiral Wagner that the Japanese were probably using Coron Bay as a base for their tankers in connection with fueling their fleet. Accordingly, he directed that I use available aircraft to execute an evening twilight attack on the tankers. The aircraft were dispatched but found Coron Bay empty. This was very disappointing as the pilots were very eager to add a few tankers to their score.

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HEADQUARTERS
COMMANDER IN CHIEF
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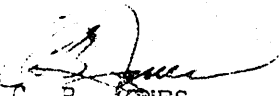
HEADQUARTERS
COMMANDER IN CHIEF
ATLANTIC COMMAND AND ATLANTIC FLEET

The plot of the sector searches indicates that sector 5 was a long PBY sector touching Samar and continuing some distance to the north. I distinctly remember however, that prior to the Battle for Leyte Gulf that sector was shortened to extend only to the latitude of southern Samar. The area previously covered was taken over by Renard. The shortened sector 5 was flown by PV's. This proved to be unfortunate because we had two of them shot down by our own CVE based fighters.

I regret that I am unable to accept your kind invitation to lunch. I am being detached on the 5th of this month to be Chief of Staff for Commander Fleet Air Alameda at the Naval Air Station, Alameda.

I hope that my information will be of assistance to you. If what I have given needs clarification or generates a requirement for additional information I shall be happy to oblige.

Very sincerely,


C. B. JONES
Captain, U.S. Navy

0954

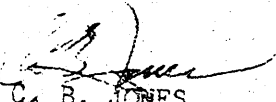
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Very sincerely,


C. B. JONES
Captain, U.S. Navy

0955

• Capt. C.B. Jones
Ch. of Staff, Com. 7th Air Alameda
Naval Air Station
Alameda, Cal.

11 Sept 1953

Dear Jones: -

Upon return from the best vacation I have had since retirement, which included trout and bass fishing in northern Wisconsin and Michigan, I found your letter of 4 Aug. I regret the delay in acknowledging it.

Your letter is very interesting to me and I am grateful to you for the trouble you took to prepare the chart showing the plot of your searches from Morotai and for the information regarding the searches and, particularly, in reference to communication.

I learned about communications in the first year of the war (observation, evaluation, transmission, further evaluation, delivery, further evaluation and current application, then action.)

~~Although, I may have known at the time, I had forgotten about the contacts with enemy forces made by the planes from Morotai and about your problem with Air Force Communication.~~

Your letter brought back to me several things which I knew at the time but had forgotten. Your problems with Air

0956

These communications are not difficult for me to understand as I saw much of that sort of thing during the war. I am glad to be reminded that the Morotai planes which made contact with the Surigao and San Bernardino forces continued tracking and reporting until forced to return. It is to be regretted that the PB4Y search in Sector 5 was shortened just before the naval action. Not only did we lose 2 PVs as a result but the PB4Ys might have made contact with Kurita at San Bernardino. Renard's planes sent to make that search were not successful.

Again, thank you for your letter with best wishes for a happy and successful cruise.

Sincerely,
H.K.